

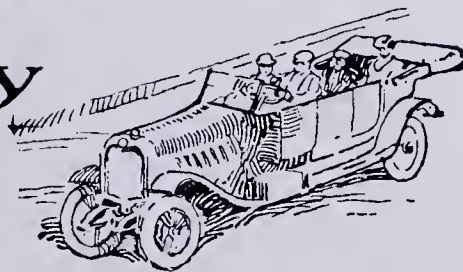
THE FORERUNNER OF THE CHURCH



100th Anniversary

AMERICAN
SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION

MAY, 1917



THE FORERUNNER OF THE CHURCH

IN establishing more than one hundred and twenty thousand Sunday-schools, largely in undeveloped and sparsely settled communities, from which thousands of successful churches, representing practically all denominations, have been developed, the American Sunday-School Union for one hundred years has steadfastly maintained its policy of being undenominational in its form and interdenominational in its work.

Phillips Brooks said: "The American Sunday-School Union goes to distant regions; it marches in the front, gathering in the poor and outcast, and reaches to points otherwise inaccessible. Afterwards the church comes, with its more complicated machinery, and completes the work."

The American Sunday-School Union does not operate in the larger towns and cities. It does not "compete" with denominational churches. It occupies an entirely exclusive field. It works in the remote and almost inaccessible territories that are beyond the reach of all other religious and benevolent organizations.

D. L. Moody said, "The American Sunday-School Union is doing a work of the first importance in evangelizing the country settlements, and is doing it more efficiently and economically than any other agency."

Moreover it is the only agency that can bring together in common worship, Bible study and community service, all the people of any neighborhood in which there are not enough residents of any one denomination to start a church or Sunday-school of their own.

The American Journal of Education, in discussing the history and work of the American Sunday-School Union, says: "Where the influence of the Sunday-school was

most needed, there the greatest hindrance was to be overcome because of the variety of creeds and conflict of religious influences and usages. To meet these conditions, then as now, there was need of a society which should be distinctively a Union, Evangelical, Home Missionary Sunday-School Society. No other society could enter a community on the same basis as that on which this Society was introduced. By the name it bore, 'Union'; by the purpose of its presence, 'to unite in Bible Study'; and by its most catholic spirit, 'embracing all,' it united all, old and young, in Bible study and in Christian work and worship."

The Sunday-schools founded by the American Sunday-School Union are maintained on a union basis only until such time as a majority of the members indicate a desire for a denominational affiliation. They are then free to express their preference without any influence on the part of this Society; and when a permanent denominational connection has been effected—which is usually coincident with, or closely followed by, the formation of a local church—the responsibility of the American Sunday-School Union for that community has been transferred.

Thus, it will be seen that the Union Sunday-school is the forerunner of the church. It is the foundation upon which the church is built. The American Sunday-School Union blazes the trail into localities theretofore unreached by religious influence, and paves the way for denominational organizations to step in later on and continue the work of religious and social development along their own lines.

And now, as this Society is preparing to celebrate its One-Hundredth Anniversary in its great work of Sunday-school organization and development, it is also planning to extend its work and influence more widely than ever before, and invites the co-operation and support of all church and Sunday-school organizations and their respective individual members.

This appeal is made because there are over forty million (40,000,000) people in the United States still unreached by religious influence, a large proportion of them children

and young people whose lives can be properly guided and developed more effectively through the agency of the Sunday-school than by any other means.

It will, therefore, be readily seen that there is still a vast work to be done by this Society, and the more generously the organization is supported the more vigorously can this work be carried on.

In conjunction with its work of Sunday-school promotion and community development, the American Sunday-School Union issues Sunday-school periodicals and religious literature of all kinds. Its literature goes only where denominational literature could not be used or where Union literature is more suitable or more effective. Even denominational missionaries often find it necessary to use this Society's literature because of the variety of faiths they encounter in their work.

The following quotation from a prominent Presbyterian clergyman, in reference to the American Sunday-School Union, "hits the nail on the head": "* * * while it cannot do the work of our Board, it has a field of its own to cultivate which our Board cannot reach; and for which, nevertheless, we, in common with Christians of other names, are bound to do what we can. It would be superfluous to illustrate this remark. Every one must assent to it, who has not closed his eyes to the efficient labors of the Union, in bringing the wide spiritual wastes of our country under cultivation."

He also states in reference to the Society's literature: "I have seen the happy influence of these books upon families of children; and still more, I have observed the healthful action of this Institution in promoting the radical revolution which has taken place in the juvenile literature of the age. The auspicious change wrought in this department within the brief cycle of a single generation, is largely to be attributed, under Providence, to the agency, direct and indirect, of the American Sunday-School Union."

The American Sunday-School Union has distributed by sale and by gift more than ten million dollars' worth of morally sound, instructive literature. The Society also carries a full line of Sunday-school supplies and req-



Attending Sunday-school under difficulties in Idaho.



A Union Sunday-school of the Southwest.



A Nevada town of 600 population. A recently organized Union Sunday-school is the only religious service in this entire community. A good church will doubtless be a later development.



In the foreground on the left is shown the superintendent of a newly organized Sunday-school in the South. On the right is shown a fully developed school, also in the South.



Here are shown twelve of the twenty-eight churches, of various denominations, that have developed from the work of a single missionary of the American Sunday-School Union. This picture is a forceful illustration of the Union Sunday-school as the forerunner of the church. There are over two hundred Union missionaries doing similar work.



The meeting place of a newly organized Sunday-school in the Lakes District. Many churches develop from such humble beginnings.

uisites. This department is maintained particularly for the equipment of new Sunday-schools which are constantly being organized and which, frequently, are without adequate funds in their early stages.

Among the Society's famous editors were such men as Samuel Austin Allibone, LL.D., author of the "Dictionary of Authors," a monumental and standard work; and Richard Newton, D.D., known as "The Prince of Children's Preachers."

A well-known clergyman of the middle west writes as follows: "For several years I have watched the workings of the American Sunday-School Union and its devoted agents. In many communities they are the pioneers of Christian effort. By the organization of Sunday-schools they reach the children, and by means of evangelistic services they reach the adults and provide teachers for the young; and thus they lay deep and strong foundations for permanent religious instruction, character and work. They merit universal sympathy and help."

And here is an interesting letter from a Colorado physician: "For more than eighteen years I have been identified with the work of the American Sunday-School Union. My office has been headquarters for the county work, and the opportunity thus afforded gives me a thorough knowledge of what the Union's work has been in this territory.

"Our county is very large and much of it thinly settled. In its outlying, sparsely settled districts Sabbath-schools have been organized by the American Sunday-School Union, and some ten or twelve of these have already grown into church organizations.

"What the Union's work has done for us here cannot be overestimated. I am sure that its missionary touches more lives than does the pastor of any one of our churches. When I think of the growth of our county during the past twenty years, and note the work done in it by the Union's representatives, I feel proud to be identified with it. Its influence has always been good and has certainly been more extended than that of any other of our religious institutions."

An Arkansas attorney who is familiar with the Society's effective work in the mining camps of western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, says: "I have been contributing to this work a number of years and know of nothing that gives greater returns for the amount invested."

Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis, famous pastor of the Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, states: "No form of Christian work with which I am acquainted is more economical or yields larger returns. Every good citizen should help this Union Bible work. Its support and extension is vital to our American society."

And so we might continue indefinitely, with statement after statement from people everywhere, of every denomination, who know exactly what the American Sunday-School Union has accomplished in the past, what it is doing right now and what it plans to do in the future. The work of this Society is missionary work in its most practical and effective form.

Robert S. Scott (of Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company), leading merchant of Chicago, summed it up when he said: "This Society ought to be generously supported by the benevolent of all sects and denominations, by all who love their country and desire its greatest good." Hundreds of prominent clergymen and business men of all denominations have expressed similar opinions.

The American Sunday-School Union is *a pioneer for the denominations and bears to them the relation of an efficient servant*. It is said to be the only organization of its kind that seeks to turn over to others all the results of its labors. As the Society is supported chiefly by voluntary contributions, the co-operation of Christian workers everywhere is earnestly invited.

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION
1816 CHESTNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA

N. B.—This is the third of a series of five pamphlets designated as A, B, C, D and E. The other four pamphlets will be gladly furnished upon request.



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